

Task Force on the Economic Future of Western Maryland

October 26, 2020;
10 AM

Meeting Minutes

Task Force Members in Attendance:

Senator George Edwards, *Co-Chair*
Delegate Jason Buckel, *Co-Chair*
Jody Sprinkle, *TEDCO*
Cort Meinelschmidt, *Washington County Commissioner, MACO*
Shelley McIntire, *Hagerstown City Council Member, MML*
Al Delia, *Vice President for Economic and Regional Engagement, Frostburg State University*
Paul Frey, *President and CEO, Washington County Chamber of Commerce*
Andrew Sargent, *Sr. Business Development Representative, Western MD, Maryland Department of Commerce*

Task Force Staff in Attendance:

Michael Siers, *Economist, Maryland Department of Commerce*

I. Call to Order

a. Remarks by the Co-Chairs

The co-chairs welcomed participants to the call. Senator Edwards noted that it was great to see so much interest from non-members of the task force. Senator Edwards also noted that the body should move relatively quickly so that some recommendations can be ready by the next legislative session. Delegate Buckel signaled that he was very interested in the presentations and in finding ways to get results for Western Maryland.

II. TEDCO presentation

Stephen Auvil (TEDCO's Executive Vice President) presented on behalf of TEDCO. Mr. Auvil's presentation provided a detailed overview of TEDCO's activities and the programs it supports. The presentation focused on TEDCO's three pillars: technology transfer, gateway services, and investments. During the presentation, Mr. Auvil mentioned the Maryland Innovation Initiative (MII) which works with five research institutions in the state (Johns Hopkins University; Morgan State University; University of Maryland, Baltimore; University of Maryland, Baltimore County; and University of Maryland, College Park). Senator Edwards asked Mr. Auvil if TEDCO partners with Frostburg. Mr. Auvil indicated that TEDCO has worked with Frostburg in the past and that Chuck Ernst with TEDCO works with Frostburg. Delegate Buckel asked Mr. Auvil

how Frostburg could be added to the list of research institutions under the MII. Mr. Auvil indicated that the institutions are written into the program's statute and mentioned that TEDCO is interested in expanding the number of universities and colleges they partner with. Al Delia, of Frostburg State University, mentioned that because Frostburg does not have a Carnegie Classification of a Research I institution, it may not be added to the MII program. However, Mr. Delia mentioned that additional funding to the university could help support more faculty who conduct research. Mr. Delia indicated that this funding would likely need to be approved by the USM Board of Regents. Heather Gramm, of the Maryland Department of Commerce, asked Mr. Delia if the Department's Maryland E-Innovation Initiative Fund (MEIF) could help support Frostburg. The MEIF offers a state match to private funds raised to support research endowments; while the program has been successful, Ms. Gramm noted that the program is set to sunset. Finally, Paul Frey asked if TEDCO would partner with the new incubator at Hagerstown Community College and Mr. Auvil indicated that TEDCO would be interested.

III. Maryland Department of Commerce presentations

a. Business development

Jayson Knott of the Maryland Department of Commerce presented on business attraction efforts at the Maryland Department of Commerce. Mr. Knott highlighted that while business attraction is not a panacea, it does constitute a significant portion of what the Maryland Department of Commerce tracks. The Department is largely focused on two main constituencies: site selectors and corporate end users. Delegate Buckel asked about companies that have gotten credits through the More Jobs for Marylanders program in Western Maryland. Mr. Knott promised Delegate Buckel that the Department would provide relevant data. Senator Edwards asked how often the Department updates its portfolio of assets for each county. Mr. Knott replied that the Department is constantly updating its information to stay current and is in close contact with the regional representatives who have contacts with key local businesses as well.

b. Industry support

Heather Gramm and Andrew Sargent from the Maryland Department of Commerce presented on the Office of Strategic Industries and Entrepreneurship (OSIE) and the Office of Regional Growth and Retention. Ms. Gramm provided an overview of the OSIE including select initiatives that have been implemented in Western Maryland or might be of interest. These included a recent EDA grant that the Department is working on with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on forestry, the Maryland Manufacturing Extension Partnership, the Strategic Industry Grant Program, and the MEIF. Additionally, Ms. Gramm mentioned asset mapping efforts. Mr. Sargent provided an overview of the Office of Regional Growth and Retention, including his role and efforts in Western Maryland. Al Delia of Frostburg State University mentioned asset mapping efforts of defense contractors and wondered what information might be available to him for that. Mr. Siers mentioned that the Maryland Department

of Commerce has produced a map of the Maryland defense industry available at marylanddefensenetwork.org.

IV. Target industry overview

Michael Siers, staff for the task force, presented on key industries. During the prior meeting, Mr. Siers presented on key industries in the region and how industries identified in the statute were positioned in Western Maryland. Members were curious how these sectors overlapped with existing economic development plans by the three counties in the region. Mr. Siers' presentation indicated that there was substantial overlap in key sectors, both between the counties' economic development plans and the industries of interest identified in the statute.

V. Discussion of initial recommendations

This agenda item was skipped due to time constraints. Senator Edwards indicated that the next meeting should continue with information gathering but also contain time for considering initial recommendations.

VI. Next Steps

The co-chairs indicated that they would like the next meeting to be held ideally the week of November 16 or November 23. Members were asked to email Michael Siers with date preferences. Members also discussed potential topics for the next meeting. Topics included:

- Infrastructure at the county level,
- Funding priorities at the county level,
- Broadband access
- Incubators (including status and resources needed to be more successful).

Members were encouraged to email Michael Siers with additional topics for consideration.

VII. Closing Remarks/Adjournment

Senator Edwards asked if any members of the public wished to make public comments. None did. Senator Edwards and Delegate Buckel then thanked all participants for their time and concluded the meeting.